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April 11, 2008
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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BALTIMORE MAN PLEADS GUILTY IN FIREBOMBING

Baltimore, Maryland - Marcus Crandell, age 22, of Baltimore, Maryland, pleaded guilty yesterday to use of a destructive device in the commission of a crime of violence, in connection with a firebombing on June 2, 2007, announced United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein.

According to the plea agreement, on June 1, 2007, Crandell got into a fight with a man he had known since childhood. The man left the area and returned a short while later with a handgun and robbed Crandell of his cell phone and cash and made him take off his shoes, which he threw onto a roof where Crandell could not retrieve them.

Crandell admitted that he became very angry at the robbery and being humiliated by his childhood acquaintance. Crandell purchased a bottle of isopropyl alcohol and stole a can of gasoline from the back of a work truck parked in the neighborhood. Crandell devised a molotov cocktail using a glass Seagram's Gin bottle filled with isopropyl alcohol and a paper wick. Early on June 2, 2007, Crandell went to the man's home, threw a brick through the window of his second floor apartment, ignited the wick of the molotov cocktail and threw the device through the window where the brick had shattered the glass. The man came downstairs and when he opened the door Crandell threw gasoline on him and tried to ignite it but the man shut the door. There was evidence of burning around the frame of the door. The man removed his gasoline soaked clothing, which was recovered after the event, and left the area.

A few hours later, Crandell and others broke into the man's apartment by kicking in the door. They splashed gasoline around the apartment and ignited it, causing serious damage to the property and forcing those who were living in the first floor apartment to evacuate the building.

"The act of attempting to burn another human being through the use of a Molotov cocktail is a horrific crime," says ATF Special Agent in Charge Gregory K. Gant. "This type of investigation is of the highest priority for our agency as we work to put the most violent criminals in jail."

Crandell faces a minimum mandatory sentence of 30 years in prison and a maximum of life in prison, followed by five years of supervised release. U.S. District Judge Andre M. Davis has scheduled sentencing for May 1, 2008 at 10:00 a.m.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein thanked the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the Baltimore City Police Department for their investigative work. Mr. Rosenstein commended Assistant United States Attorney A. David Copperthite, who is prosecuting the case.